Physicals, Training, PPE & Membership Dues Assistance for Volunteer Emergency Responders

ADMINISTRATIVE GUIDE

New England Association of Fire Chiefs

2025 SAFER Grant for Recruiting
New Volunteer Emergency Responders

November 15, 2026

Introduction

The New England Association of Fire Chiefs (NEAFC) was awarded a $3.3M Staffing for Adequate Fire and Emergency Response (SAFER) grant through the Department of Homeland Security to recruit and retain Volunteer Firefighters in Connecticut, Maine, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, Rhode Island, and Vermont.

The **Period of Performance is 12/23/2025 - 12/22/2029**. Funds will be managed to support eligible Volunteer and Combination fire department participants throughout the grant period.

Program Description

The program helps offset eligible onboarding and retention costs for Volunteer Emergency Responders. Assistance includes NFPA 1582 physicals, basic firefighter training (First Responder, EMT, Firefighter-1 & Firefighter-2), personal protective equipment (PPE), and membership dues assistance.

Membership dues assistance is available for IAFC/NEAFC, State Fire Chiefs Associations, State Volunteer Firefighters Associations, and NVFC memberships.

NOTE: Limit of **five (5) reimbursements in each category per fire department. A waitlist is available for departments seeking reimbursement for more than five (5+) new recruits.*

Physicals, Training and PPE Reimbursement

Volunteer Emergency Responders recruited on or after **9/24/2025** are considered “new” by FEMA and are eligible to receive reimbursement for the following with **a two year commitment** to a recognized Volunteer or Combination fire department in Connecticut, New Hampshire, Maine, Massachusetts, Rhode Island, and Vermont.

**NOTE: Rhode Island fire departments are to submit reimbursement requests to RIAFC Grant Manager Aletia Flaherty: aletia@volunteerfirefighter.org.*

NFPA 1582 Physical: Up to **$400** for a NFPA 1582 compliant physical for **new recruits** with a corresponding Physician 1582 Sign-Off Form confirming a “Pass” and “Fit for Duty” status.

Firefighter Basic Training: Up to **$2,500** for **new and existing members** for First Responder, EMT, Firefighter-1, and Firefighter-2 training expenses, including eligible travel costs. Newly recruited volunteers must meet the department's minimum fire and EMS training requirements within the first 12 months of appointment.

Personal Protective Equipment (PPE): Up to **$4,125** for a full set of structural or wildland PPE (SAFER eligible NFPA compliant turnouts) for **new recruits** who have successfully passed a NFPA 1582 physical and who have completed or are enrolled in Firefighter-1 level training (or departmental

equivalent). One set of PPE per Volunteer. **Per FEMA, all PPE must be delivered prior to submitting for reimbursement**.

NOTE: Expenses must be incurred (invoiced/paid) after the start of the Period of Performance (12/23/2025) to be eligible for reimbursement. ***Reimbursement checks will be mailed to the Volunteer and/or Fire Department depending on who paid for the expenses.***

Physicals, Training and PPE Reimbursement Process

Below are the steps intended to process a Volunteer through the NEAFC SAFER program:

Step 1: The Volunteer completes the membership process with a Volunteer/Combination department in these six States: Connecticut, Maine, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, Rhode Island, and Vermont.

Step 2: The Fire Chief forwards the completed "Physical & PPE Reimbursement Form" and "Training Reimbursement Form" to NEAFC's SAFER Grant Manager once all requirements are met.

Step 3: To receive reimbursement, recipients must provide the following documentation:

- ☐ Proof the Volunteer has passed a NFPA 1582 compliant physical and is certified as "fit for duty."
- ☐ Invoice and proof of payment for the physical (with the Volunteer's name referenced).
- ☐ The new Volunteer must complete or be enrolled in Firefighter-1 level training (or departmental equivalent) prior to receiving reimbursement for PPE.
- ☐ Fire Chief authorization is required certifying the minimum training requirements have been met and the Volunteer is an active member in good standing.
- ☐ Invoice and proof of payment for PPE (with the Volunteer's name referenced).

Step 4: The NEAFC SAFER Grant Manager will review all reimbursement forms as they come in, verify the documentation, and then submit the request for payment to FEMA.

Step 5: Once the funds are received from FEMA (usually 4-6 weeks after submission), then the NEAFC SAFER Grant Manager will send a check to the fire department and/or Volunteer.

Membership Dues Assistance

The SAFER grant provides membership dues assistance for eligible active Volunteer Emergency Responders age 18+. Junior and Associate members are ineligible.

IAFC + NEAFC + VCOS Membership - Direct Enrollment (No Upfront Department Payment)

Departments requesting IAFC membership do not need to pay IAFC upfront. Adapt Management will coordinate enrollment with IAFC and submit the eligible cost to FEMA through the NEAFC SAFER grant process to pay IAFC on the department's behalf.

Approved enrollment includes IAFC membership, the New England Division, and the Volunteer & Combination Officers Section (VCOS).

To enroll:

- ☐ Complete the NEAFC "Membership Dues Assistance Request Form" and select IAFC & NEAFC.
- ☐ Complete the IAFC Enrollment Roster template with the required member information.
- ☐ Send the request form and enrollment roster to Alex Flores: alex@volunteerfirefighter.org.

NVFC Membership - Direct Enrollment (No Upfront Department Payment)

Eligible new and existing active volunteers may receive NVFC membership without the department paying upfront.

To enroll:

- ☐ Complete the NEAFC "Membership Dues Assistance Request Form" and select NVFC.
- ☐ Provide an Active Roster of your department's eligible members.
- ☐ Send the request form and your active roster to Alex Flores: alex@volunteerfirefighter.org.

State Association Memberships - Reimbursement

State Fire Chiefs Association and State Volunteer Firefighters Association memberships are processed as **reimbursements**. The department pays the eligible membership expense first, then submits the Membership Dues Assistance Request Form, invoice, and proof of payment.

State Fire Chiefs Association Membership

- ➔ Connecticut Fire Chiefs Association
- ➔ Maine Fire Chiefs Association
- ➔ Fire Chiefs Association of Massachusetts
- ➔ New Hampshire Association of Fire Chiefs
- ➔ Vermont State Firefighters' Association
- ➔ Rhode Island Association of Fire Chiefs **Rhode Island VFDs should obtain assistance with membership dues via RIAFC's SAFER grant. Please contact Aletia Flaherty: aletia@volunteerfirefighter.og.*

State Volunteer Firefighters Association Membership

- ➔ Connecticut State Firefighters Association (CSFA)
- ➔ Maine State Federation of Firefighters (MSFFF)
- ➔ Massachusetts Call/Volunteer Firefighters Association (MCVFA)

Send all membership reimbursement requests to Alex Flores: alex@volunteerfirefighter.org.

General Program Eligibility

The following is a list of program guidelines set forth in the SAFER grant narrative and must be adhered to by NEAFC and all participants:

1. Provide proof of membership to a Volunteer or Combination fire department or emergency services agency in these six (6) States: Connecticut, Maine, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, Rhode Island, and Vermont.
2. Newly recruited Volunteers must be at least 18 years old at the time of the reimbursement request.
3. **Volunteer, Paid-on-Call, Part-time, Reserve, and "Call" Firefighters are eligible for these benefits if their annual pay is a "Nominal Stipend". A Nominal Stipend is pay that does not exceed 20% of what the fire department would otherwise pay to hire a full-time firefighter to perform the services for which the stipend is provided. Whether a stipend falls above or below the 20% threshold may be determined in one of two ways. Departments that maintain paid full-time firefighters on their payrolls may compare the stipend to the salary they pay a full-time firefighter who performs similar services to determine whether the stipend is more or less than 20% of that salary. Departments that do not maintain full time firefighters on their payrolls may make the determination based on a comparison to the salary paid to a full-time firefighter in a neighboring jurisdiction, or elsewhere in the state.**
4. Preference will be given to departments who are members of the NEAFC.
5. Preference will be given to post-9/11 Veterans in an effort to support these dedicated service members and the VOW to Hire Heroes Act of 2011.
6. For each physical/training/PPE reimbursement request awarded, the Volunteer must commit to a two year membership to a volunteer fire department.
7. Volunteers who obtain a career firefighter job during the time of commitment must still fulfill their volunteer role in a department for a minimum of 24 months.
8. Volunteers must remain an active volunteer in good standing with the Sponsoring Department/Agency and respond to at least 25 percent of the department's calls or operational activities as established by the Sponsoring Department/Agency.
9. Volunteers must commit to completing Firefighter-1 within 24 months of becoming a Volunteer or meet the required training level of the local Authority Having Jurisdiction (AHJ) to meet minimum firefighter certification.
10. The Volunteer's Chief/Commissioner/Director must sign the reimbursement forms to collect reimbursement for physical/training/PPE expenses.
11. The Volunteer must submit a reimbursement request form for all firefighter training travel expenses including expenses for mileage, lost wages, federal per diem rate for meals, and GSA rate lodging incurred during that reimbursement period. This form MUST be signed by the Chief.

IMPORTANT: This is a reimbursement program. All major requirements must be met before

reimbursement can be made. The Volunteer must provide their invoices and receipts for proper documentation of all reimbursements via federal grant funds.

The grant performance period ends 12/22/2029. All reimbursement requirements must be completed by this date, PPE must be delivered by this date, and all funds disbursed.

**NOTE: All applicable local, state or federal laws and regulations shall supersede the procedures and conditions outlined in this Administrative Guide. These guidelines are subject to change without notice.*

Program Contacts

For questions about eligibility, requirements or specific reimbursement forms, please email:

Alex Flores - NEAFC SAFER Grant Benefits Representative
Email: alex@volunteerfirefighter.org

Chris Barron - NEAFC SAFER Grant Manager
Email: chris@volunteerfirefighter.org

Phone: 855-VOL-FIRE
Website: VolunteerFirefighter.org

NEAFC SAFER Grant Committee Members Representing:

CT	Chief Peter Starkel	pstarkel@hebronfd.com
ME	Chief Paul Smeltzer	firechief@waldoboromaine.org
MA	Chief Eric Hajder	ehajder@swanseama.gov
NH	Chief Ken Jones	kjones@meredithnh.org
RI	Chief Robert Bradley	rbradley@manvillefire.com
VT	Chief Micah Genzlinger	fire@fairfax-vt.gov